

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Optima Bus Corp

Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center

Optima Bus Attains ISO 9001-2000 Certification in 100 Days

Client Profile:

Optima Bus Corp., located in Valley Center, Kansas, is a leading manufacturer of transportation products, including the Opus Low-Floor Bus and American Heritage Streetcar. The company was founded in 1979 as the Chance Coach division of Chance Industries, Inc.. Increased demand for the company's products from municipalities downsizing their bus fleets prompted the management group, along with American Capital Strategies, to purchase all company assets in 1998. Chance Coach adopted the name Optima Bus Corp. in 2003 to reflect its renewed mission and commitment to the small and medium bus market. The company employs 125 people.

Situation:

For Optima's market, new orders are generally awarded on an evaluated bid response where the supplier's quality system represents 10 to 30 points out of a possible 100. ISO certification satisfies part or all of the quality evaluation. Optima Bus had targeted future orders as critical to successfully meeting their 2004 sales goals and wanted ISO certification to help them successfully win new business. Optima needed to do this on a short time frame and needed outside expertise to guide them through the process. Optima Bus Corp. contacted the Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center (MAMTC), a NIST MEP affiliate, for help.

Solution:

MAMTC's Brian Blumberg, familiar with all the complexities of ISO 9000-2000, worked with Optima step-by-step through the rigorous process of assessing its operations, identifying problem areas, and then devising a plan to improve overall quality and efficiency. Expanding from Optima's good quality procedures in place, Brian helped them improve and develop new improved systems. Optima went through the formal registration process and successfully attained its ISO 9001-2000 certification in a mere 100 days, under budget.

Results:

- * Attained ISO 9001-2000 registration.
- * Continuous improvement process in place.
- * Anticipated sales increase of \$400,000.

Testimonial:

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